

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W

----- 001427

R 161634Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5630

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK

SUBJECT: LABOR PUSHES ITS LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AS PARLIA-
MENT RECONVENES

REF: (A) LONDON 12220; (B) LONDON A-737 OF AUGUST 24,L975

SUMMARY - HOUSE OF COMMONS RECONVENED OCTOBER 13 TO COM-
PLETE BUSINESQ LEFT OVER WHEN IT ROSE IN AUGUST. CONTRO-
VERSIAL COMMUNITY LAND AND TRADE UNION AND LABOR RELA-
TIONS BILLS WERE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS, AND LABOR MA-
JORITY, WITH QOME SUPPORT FROM MINOR PARTIES, ROUTED
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CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION. HOUSE OF LORDS, HOWEVER, MAY

CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT ON BOTH BILLS, EITHER BY WATERING DOWN LEGISLATION OR DELAYING ACTION UNTIL CURRENT SESSION ENDS. WHILE THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT GOVERNMENT AND COMMONS WOULD ULTIMATELY PREVAIL IN SUCH A CONFRONTATION, SPOILING TACTICS BY LORDS WOULD AGAIN RAISE ISSUE OF RE-FORM OF THATBODY. END SUMMARY.

1. HOUSE OF COMMONS RECONVENED OCTOBER 13 FOLLOWING AUGUST HOLIDAY AND PARTY CONFERENCES (HOUSE OF LORDS RECONVENED IN SEPTEMBER, AS IT HAD FALLEN BEHIND IN GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM), TO COMPLETE WORK ON SEVERAL MAJOR ITEMS OF LEGISLATION (REFS A AND B) BEFORE NOVEMBER OPENING OF NEXT PARLIAMENT. FIRST ITEM WAS CONTROVERSIAL COMMUNITY LAND BILL WHICH IS DESIGNED TO CONTROL LARGE-SCALE REAL ESTATE SPECULATION. DESPITE STRONG TORY OPPOSITION AND AN ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF AMENDMENTS, INCLUDING SOME OFFERED BY GOVERNMENT, BILL WAS APPROVED OCTOBER 14 AND SENT TO LORDS. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE (OR HOPE) LORDS WILL SEEK TO WATER DOWN GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL THROUGH AMENDMENT OR DELAY ITS PASSAGE. EITHER WAY THE BILL WOULD BE KILLED FOR THE CURRENT SESSION.

2. LORDS AMENDED PROVISIONS OF TRADE UNION AND LABOR RELATIONS BILL, CAUSING THE GOVERNMENT SOME DIFFICULTY (GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED THIS BILL IN LORDS RATHER THAN COMMONS TO AVOID LEGISLATIVE LOGJAM IN LATTER HOUSE). LORDS' AMENDMENT WOULD HAVE EXEMPTED NEWSPAPERS FROM CLOSED SHOP PROVISIONS OF BILL AND WAS JUSTIFIED ON GROUNDS OF PRESS FREEDOM, GOVERNMENT, NOT SURPRISINGLY, WAS UNWILLING TO MAKE EXCEPTION FOR NEWSPAPERS. THIS ISSUE HAS STIRRED CONSIDERABLE MEDIA ATTENTION AND SUPPORT FOR LORDS' AMENDMENT. HOWEVER, ON OCTOBER 15 COMMONS HAD SERIES OF VOTES WHICH OVERTURNED LORDS' AMENDMENT AND APPROVED LABOR BACKBENCH AMENDMENT (ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT) PROVIDING FOR SEPARATE "CHARTER" TO PROTECT PRESS FREEDOM. GOVERNMENT MAJORITY ON THESE VOTES RANGED FROM 31 TO 16, COMFORTABLE MARGINS. BILL WILL NOW RETURN TO LORDS FOR CONSIDERATION OF COMMONS AMENDMENTS, AND THERE H

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HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT IT MIGHT CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT
ON THIS ISSUE AS WELL. AS IN CASE OF LAND BILL, LORDS
COULD PREVENT PASSAGE THIS SESSION.

3. COMMENT: MPS ON BOTH SIDES OF COMMONS APPEAR TO HAVE
RETURNED FROM HOLIDAY AND CONFERENCES REFRESHED, AND IN
MUCH IMPROVED MOOD. LABOR'S LEFT-WING APPEARS QUIESCENT,
AT LEAST FOR MOMENT, FOLLOWING REVERSES IT SUFFERED AT
BLACKPOOL CONFERENCE. CONSERVATIVES HAVE RETURNED WITH
IMPROVED SPIRIT, IF NOT GREATER EFFECTIVENESS. INDEED,
DEBATE ON COMMUNITY LAND BILL OCCASIONALLY SOUNDED AS
THOUGH BARRICADES WERE ABOUT TO GO UP. DESPITE RHETORIC,
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WE ANTICIOATE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO COMPLETE ITS

LEGISLATIVE PPROGRAM IN SPILLOVER SESSION, ASSUMING LORDS
DOES NOT SEEK TO FRUSTRATE PASSAGE OF EITHER BILL.

4. SHOULD LOPDS BLOCK PASSAGE OF THESE BILLS, WHETHER
BY AMENDMENT MR OTHER PROCEDURAL DELAY, GOVERNMENT WOULD
HAVE TO REINTRODUCE SAME LEGISLATION IN NEXT PARLIAMENT,
TOUCHING ALL PROCEDURAL BASES ONCE AGAIN. MINIMUM DELAY
OF SIX MONTHS WOULD BE ENTAILED. MOST SIGNIFICANTLY,
HOWEVER, SUCH ACTION WOULD REOPEN QUESTION OF REFORMING
HOUSE OF LORDQ, A RISK WHICH OPPOSITION AND CROSS BENCH
PEERS MUST BE AWARE OF AND WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER IN DE-
CIDING THEIR TACTICS.

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